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THE PHILOSOPHY OF PERSONAL EQUATION.

"Of whatever temperament a professional philosopher is, he tries, when philosophizing, to sink the fact of his temperament. Temperament is no conventionally recognized reason, so he urges impersonal reasons only for his conclusions. Yet his temperament really gives him a stronger bias than any of his more strictly objective premises. It loads the evidence for him one way or the other, making for a more sentimental or a more hard-hearted view of the universe, just as this fact or that principle would. He trusts his temperament. Wanting a universe that suits it, he believes in any representation of the universe that does suit it."—*Wm. James.*

PRAGMATISM may be characterized as a philosophy which insists upon the significance of the personal equation in thinking. There is no doubt that the theory works well in explaining how certain thinkers arrive at definite results. It fails only—but in this it fails most significantly—in establishing a true philosophy; yea we might say that pragmatism (if it is to be taken seriously) actually denies the possibility of philosophy as an objective science. It deems the personal equation to be the essential feature of all philosophies, whereby philosophy changes to a mere expression of temperament, of mood, subjective disposition or the like; in this case philosophy ought to be classed with *belles lettres* and be judged as poetry. This is the opinion expressed in the editorial criticism of Pragmatism in *The Monist* (Vol. XVIII, pp.321 ff.), and we are glad to notice that Prof. Edwin Tausch at the end of his article on Professor James expresses a similar verdict.

It is true enough that the personal equation is an im-

portant element in all mental activity; even the most mechanical transactions of observers exhibit a certain regularity of definite fluctuations due to the makeup of the observer's mental organism. When the astronomer makes his observations he discovers that they are vitiated by certain irregularities which in the same person keep within certain boundaries. They are due to the limit of exactness within which the observer's nervous system, the eye, the ear and the hand perform their functions. The personal equation is a factor which has to be taken into consideration. During the development of science it has been more and more reduced, but it appears that it can never be absolutely obliterated, because organisms as well as machines are never absolutely perfect but work with accuracy only according to the nicety of their adjustment.

The factor of the personal equation is less important where the facts are plain and where the observations consist (as, e. g., in astronomy) of mere measuring or counting, but it grows with the complication of the problem.

In the domain of philosophy, religion, ethics, sociology, political economy, and generally in the interpretation of all spiritual aspirations of man, more personal interests are at stake than in astronomy; and since a general belief in a certain doctrine is an important factor in actual life, man's judgment is much more easily influenced by his desires than in natural sciences. Hence a widened scope of the personal equation. In political economy the personal equation asserts itself so vigorously that it tries to overrule the facts and is usually in readiness to twist them to suit its own convenience. We know but too well that business interests, not scientific arguments, are the decisive factors that shape man's views concerning the tariff, and conditions are similar when our favorite ideals are under discussion, our notions of God, the soul, of immortality and ethics.

Men who allow their views in politics to be shaped by private interests lack breadth of mind and fairness towards others, while sentimentalists who are incapable of logical reasoning whenever their feelings are engaged are pathological. It is true that very few people can boast of a perfect mental health, but we need not for that reason surrender our aspiration for objectivity in thought and leave the decision as to what should be recognized as truth to the prejudices of subjective preferences.

The mistake of the pragmatist consists in regarding the part which the personal equation plays as the essential feature of cognition. What is a mere shortcoming of thought is raised to the dignity of the main principle. In the pre-scientific age almost all practical problems of life were settled more in accord with the dictates of the will than of the intellect. Nevertheless the intellect was not inactive. The intellect has gradually asserted itself more and more and from the domain of the will it has wrested the formulation of one doctrine after another. Sometimes it upset old cherished errors, and sometimes it modified the traditional view by adapting it to new conditions.

During the present age the influence of science on religion has grown more and more and the will to believe has become less and less the ultimate determinant of religious convictions. We are fully convinced that there are not two domains of truth, one the noetic, the other the teleological or spiritual. The so-called spiritual sciences, psychology, the history of religion, philosophy, ethics, are based on a condition of objective facts just as much as is the knowledge of the purely mechanical processes of nature. There is only this difference, that men of a sentimental temperament are more easily influenced in their judgments in the so-called spiritual domain of the sciences, philosophy, psychology, ethics, etc., while the scope for difference in the domain of the intellectual truth, logic,

physics, chemistry, astronomy, etc., is scarcely any longer possible.

To the pre-scientific man conviction is truth, and the intensity of his conviction is naively accepted as the measure of the reliability of truth. The pragmatist is really naive enough to continue, or rather to fall back upon this pre-scientific stage of thought. So he looks upon science as an assumption and has no use for the work of those philosophers who have laid a foundation for philosophy as an objective science. In this sense pragmatists declare Kant to be antiquated, *ein überwundener Standpunkt*.

Think what would become of the reliability of astronomy if we had to look upon the theories of Copernicus, Kepler and Newton as the products of personal equations simply because an element of personal equation is to be taken into account in the astronomical calculations.

Pragmatism has taken a strong hold upon the present generation, but it remains to be hoped that this is more due to the attractive personality of Professor James than to any intrinsic power in its leading ideas. If pragmatism were right the only scientific treatment of a philosophy would be the one which Professor Tausch administers to Professor James. He abstains from critically investigating the latter's views but analyzes his doctrines and explains them in terms of genetic psychology. It looks more like a physician's diagnosis than a philosophical inquiry, the more so when we notice that even in his methods Professor Tausch is inclined to imitate Dr. Morton Prince when he deals with disintegrated personalities.

I agree with Professor James in the recognition of the personal element that enters into the makeup of our philosophies, but while I propose to eliminate it and build upon the assured conclusions of our thought a philosophy of objective significance, he, being a man of strong sentiment, is so overwhelmed by the paramount part which the per-

sonal equation plays that he proclaims a doctrine called pragmatism which however would be more correctly described as a philosophy of the personal equation.

It is true that in philosophy, and in still higher degree in religion, it is very difficult for any man to discriminate between objectively assured arguments and his own personal equation, nevertheless it is not impossible to do so, and we take the progress of science, especially the obvious influence of science upon religion, as an evidence of our statement. We grant further that those philosophers in whom the personal equation is greatest, are most emphatic in the defence of their very errors, for when men of intense convictions are unable to prove their belief, they make up for the lack of logic by a display of the vigor of their faith. This is but natural and Professor James goes too far when he accuses philosophers of dishonesty declaring that they pass over in silence the most important arguments of their views. It is merely the character of a pre-scientific state of culture.

When I consider my own case, I must grant that the power of sentiment should not be underrated. Having frequently been obliged to let very intense convictions based upon inherited and early acquired habits be overruled by a calm consideration of the truth, I know very well that the personal equation exists, but I know also that it can be reduced to considerably lower terms, and I deem it the duty of every thinker to eliminate as much as possible in his search for truth the vitiating factor of his personal preferences.

But is not perhaps the entire fabric of all philosophies made up of strands that can be resolved into the fibers of our personal equation? The thoughts of many people are indeed so interlaced with their sentimental natures that if we consider their cases individually it would seem hopeless to let them establish a conception of the universe that would

possess any objective reliability. Nevertheless there are scientific minds who can formulate statements with objective exactness. The multitudes of people are unscientific, but science is not for that reason impossible.

Science is not only possible, science is a fact. And if it be granted that science is a fact, we can make bold to say that scientific method must be reliable. Here is the basis of the philosophy of science.

The philosophy of science is first the science of science, or methodology; then the synthesis of all the sciences in their unison, or ontology, including their systematized result, or a scientific world-conception; and thirdly the application of this world-conception to practical life; we may call it pragmatology which includes ethics, sociology, the crafts, inventions, art, etc. This domain of philosophy is as solid ground as any field of the natural sciences and the personal equation of the philosopher, far from being the dominant factor, is here as in astronomical calculations only a source of error.

A philosopher's personal equation lies mostly in his sentiments and it would seem that a rigorously scientific thought would leave no room for sentiment, but such is not, or at any rate need not be, the case. Science does not antagonize sentiment; it would only protest that sentiment should perform the function of thought. Let the mind think and the heart feel, but when the heart governs the head, the mentality of man is apt to lose its strength.

I grant most emphatically that the noetic function of man's soul is not the only feature that needs cultivation; the domain of sentiment and will with all that they imply, enthusiasm, sympathy, emotional yearnings, devotion, religion, the love of art, music, etc., have their due place in our lives and should not be neglected. But the intellect should after all remain the supreme court of all final decisions. The intellect should not be degraded into an *an-*

cilla voluntatis, a handmaid of either the will or sentiment, but should be as independent as is the judiciary in a well-governed state.

Sentiment, religion and artistic tastes are indispensable attainments, but even these need the guiding hand of intellectual comprehension. The intellect is the organ of reason, of logic, of inquiry, of grasping the truth, of comprehending the objective order of the world, of solving the problems of existence, and of a redemption from the many unnecessary evils of life. The intellect is truly the organ in which God, the authority of moral conduct, the standard of truth, the norm of the laws of nature, reveals himself. The intellect distinguishes humanity from the brute creation, for the beast is possessed of sentiment and joy of life (sometimes even of noble sentiments) just as much as man, and the intellect alone can pave the way of progress. Even in the field of sentiment and ethics, it is the guidance of the intellect that can improve the will and ennoble man's feelings and purify his religion. Neglect to cultivate the intellect and man will return to the savage state.

In the etymological meaning of the term the philosophy of science is the true pragmatism. It is pragmatic, if pragmatism means that the truth must be tested by practical experience. But pragmatism as propounded by Professor James antagonizes rationalism, monism and the philosophy of science.

Being opposed to theory, to the principle of consistency, to monism and to any unity or systematization, pragmatism drifts into pluralism as surely as a disintegrated soul will develop a multiple personality. The result will be a realism, a clinging to the facts—not objectively assured facts, but facts of an uncritical experience, facts, as mirrored in a purely subjective interpretation of sentiment. Such is pragmatism, the philosophy of personal equation!

EDITOR.